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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 04086-86
4 September 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: MAP and SSCI Comments on Our Intelligence Estimates

1. The DCI invited comments on [] memorandum about his discussions with SSCI on the estimative process. Several points come to mind. A large number of the issues that [] is raising as Intelligence Community dilemmas spring directly from his discussions with Hal Ford and myself several months ago. We set forth to him in considerable detail what we viewed as dilemmas of the process. Some of them are "classic" dilemmas and tensions built into forecasting and estimating. Others are issues we can and are doing more about to improve. 25X1

2. The heart of the [] SSCI discussions revolve around the need for deeper insights and greater vision as to possible surprises down the road. The DCI, the DDCI, the DDI, Hal and myself have all discussed these issues jointly over the past few months. We are faced with a need to make certain kinds of decisions. 25X1

3. We all agree that we need more "new style estimates" -- the product and unified vision of a single NIO. Among community analysts the NIO probably has the broadest in-house vision of analytic and policy issues -- a conceptual understanding of problems on a par with the "personal estimates" which most good policymakers carry around in their own heads.

-- The problem which we all recognize is that these estimates tend to go well beyond the evidence and are therefore highly contentious. They are extremely difficult to coordinate and often resisted by the Community as the willful imposition of a policy view upon the Community by an NIO with an agenda.

-- These Community reservations can only be met either by (a) riding roughshod over them and offering the Community "equal time" to present their own broad vision of the problem rather than nickeling

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and diming the paper to death. In most cases the Community can not/will not come up with this alternative vision which could enrich the paper; (b) alternatively we can permit the community to vote down the paper, moving it closer to safe judgments based on existing evidence.

4. I believe that the safe Estimate reflecting Community assessment will probably be of limited value to the policymaker. It will probably not be innovative or spark much fresh thinking about a policy issue -- which is surely a main goal of any Estimate. Yet we already may be seeing some Community discontent with the direction our new style estimates are taking in which the NIO has had heavy input.

- In fact a paper with a clear view and vision of a problem is often more instructive, even when one does not fully agree with it. At the least it sets a framework, a matrix against which to try other facts and judgments.

5. I believe we need to have some alternative vehicle for the personalized NIO vision of a policy problem. Such a paper could be produced by the NIC. Prudence would dictate that the NIO, C/NIC, and VC/NIC seek critique of the NIO's draft from people whose views we value. This product would not be coordinated in any traditional sense, but would undergo some minimal review.

- I believe this kind of paper would be well received among policymakers. They already tell us that they like receiving NIO think-pieces "even if they don't agree with them." These papers that they "don't agree with" get read and discussed. Our estimates usually do not.
- The great disadvantage is that such an estimate can be dismissed as not authoritative, lacking the Community imprimatur. I venture to say that in most cases the gain -- in being read and discussed -- outweighs the merits of Community legitimacy and blessing.
- There is a precedent for this in the memos produced many years ago by the Office of National Estimates, which were circulated downtown and well received.

6. This is not to say the Community should abandon traditional Estimates which are useful in bringing the Community and estimative concerned policymakers up-to-date on where given issues stand.

- The skill will come in deciding which issues are broad enough and "political" enough to receive special NIO treatment for publication by the NIC itself. The broader, the more speculative, and more interdisciplinary the paper is, the more it would argue for

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treatment as a NIC publication -- deriving most of its legitimacy from the collective standing of the NIC -- under DCI guidance -- and NIOs as knowledgeable and experienced individuals with good insight to offer to policymakers.

7. I believe this kind of approach will start answering the concerns raised by so many of us -- including now the MAP and the SSCI -- for more "maverick," broader, and integrative papers -- which I believe is the major contribution the NIC can make.

8. Intelligence there is plenty. What we crave is how to order the information and how to understand it. These questions do not lend themselves to consensus by committees.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Graham E. Fuller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Graham" and last name "Fuller" being more distinct than the middle initial "E".

Graham E. Fuller

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